

Wellness Notes

Tips on How Become More Active In 2006*

(Part I)

- 1. Get a checkup** - Meet with your healthcare provider to see whether you'll need to consider any special modifications before starting an exercise program.
- 2. Know your options** - Before starting any program, examine your options. Pick a program you know you will enjoy and that will improve your fitness, ability to function and quality of life, BUT you must do it regularly.
- 3. Determine your participation style** - Would you prefer taking a class or going solo? Are you a morning or night person? Does indoor fitness appeal to you, or would you prefer to play outside? Could you dedicate large blocks of time to physical activity or could you fit only shorter, more frequent intervals into your schedule? Be realistic about how you participate.
- 4. Start slowly** - A good way to start slowly is to discover your baseline. Record all your activities during each waking hour or for 2 or 3 hour time blocks, tracking how much time you are sedentary (e.g. sitting at your desk) or active (e.g. walking to the bus stop). At day's end, count how many hours you have and have not been physically active. Then look at when you could fit some short (e.g. 10 minutes) bouts of brisk walking into your day.
- 5. Make a date** - Find a buddy to exercise with you and keep you motivated. An appointment to exercise makes it more likely you'll do the walk or workout.
- 6. Set specific short- and long-term goals** - Make goals as specific as possible. For example, on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, I will do a brisk, 10-minute walk in the morning before my shower, at lunch time and after dinner. Being specific means you are planning for activity in your day and making it a priority. Long-term goals are also important. Is there an activity you would like to do that you feel physically incapable of at the moment, but may be able to do with a little effort? Set a long-term goal to help you do it.
- 7. Make a list** - List the benefits you expect from your physical activity program, and then make sure these are realistic and reasonable. Many people expect enormous benefits, such as losing 30 pounds in a month. When these benefits don't materialize, they feel disappointed and relapse because they feel like they've failed. Try to make the benefits about things you can control, rather than an outcome (such as weight). Build your list of benefits as you increase your physical activity-you'll be surprised at how long your list becomes.
- 8. Make another list** - List all the reasons to be physically active, things like decreasing stress or depression, stronger bones, greater strength and flexibility to help maintain independence, increased energy, better sleep, etc. Keep this list in a visible place as a daily reminder of the long-term rewards.